

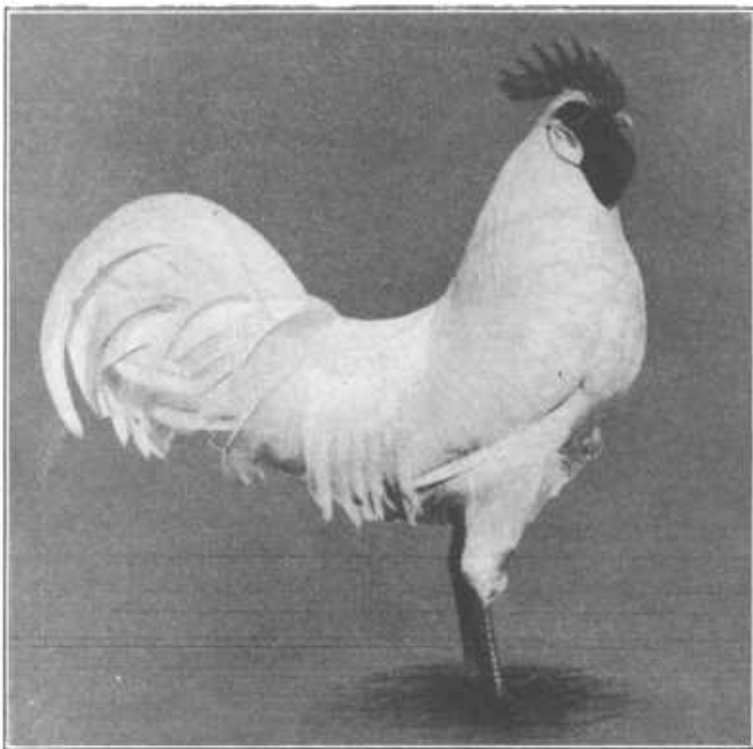
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STANDARD VARIETIES OF CHICKENS

II. THE MEDITERRANEAN AND CONTINENTAL CLASSES

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Of the Animal Husbandry Division



FARMERS' BULLETIN 898
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry

A. D. MELVIN, Chief

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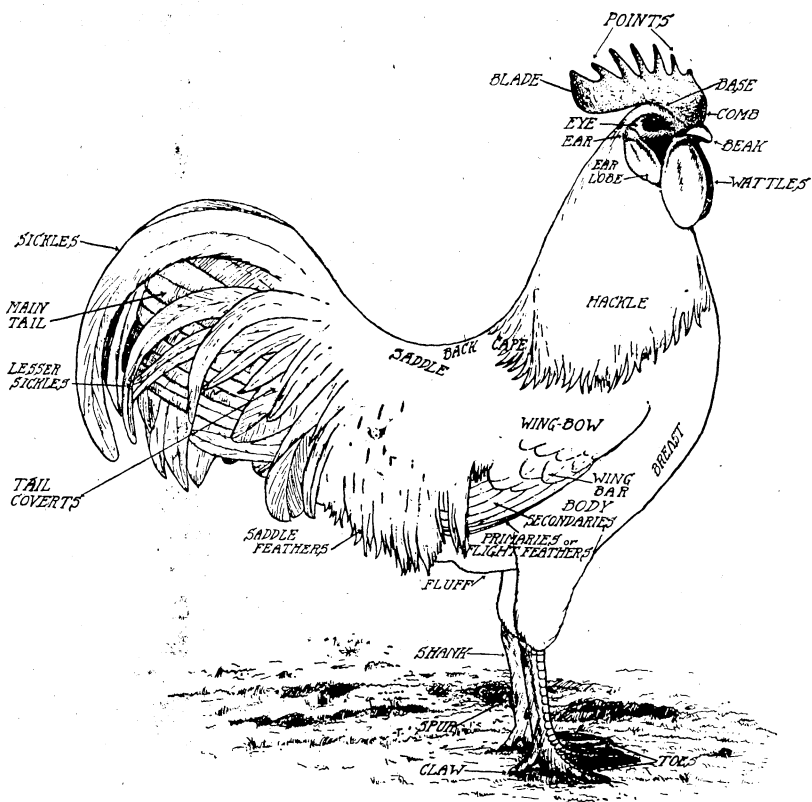


FIG. 1.—Glossary chart giving the names of the various sections of a male fowl.

STANDARD VARIETIES OF CHICKENS. II. THE MEDITERRANEAN AND CONTINENTAL CLASSES.

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IMPORTANCE OF EGG PRODUCTION.

EGG production doubtless is the leading branch of poultry keeping, and, in addition, is a very important agricultural activity. According to the last census the eggs produced in the United States in 1909 numbered more than 1,591,000,000 dozens, with a value of more than \$306,000,000. Eggs, of course, are produced wherever chickens are kept, and by far the greater part of the egg crop comes from the general farm, yet large so-called egg farms have been developed with the main purpose of producing eggs for market. The largest of these egg farms and the greater number of them are located near markets which pay a premium for white eggs; and for this reason, together with the fact that eggs are primarily desired, the breeds kept are those known as the egg breeds, such as the Leghorn, Campine, Minorca, and Ancona. The Single Comb White Leghorn is undoubtedly the most popular and the most widely kept variety of the egg breeds. These breeds comprise the Mediterranean and Continental classes, as given in the American Standard of Perfection. The egg breeds frequently are found on general farms also, particularly in those sections near markets preferring a white egg, and where considerable flocks of poultry are kept.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EGG BREEDS.

These breeds are smaller than the general-purpose breeds, such as the Plymouth Rock, and for that reason they do not make a particularly desirable table fowl and are not in as good favor with the poultry packers as the larger general-purpose breeds. Surplus cockerels, however, turned off as broilers when they weigh from three-quarters of a pound to a pound and a half, find a ready market.

The egg breeds in general are characterized by their activity and sprightliness, and are of a much more nervous temperament than

the heavier breeds. It is necessary to work and move quietly among them to avoid frightening them. They are more difficult to keep in confinement, and where their quarters are fenced, 6 or 7 foot fences are used. Clipping the flight feathers of one wing will keep them from flying over the fence. They mature more quickly than the heavier breeds, but if hatched early, they often begin to lay so early in the fall that they go into a molt like the old hens. This of course checks their egg production. It is the custom of some egg farmers to hatch early chicks for the purpose of obtaining eggs during the fall, expecting these early birds to go into a molt and depending upon later hatches to supply eggs during the late fall and winter.

Chickens of the egg breeds, because of their greater activity, are fine foragers, and when they have free range they will cover a very

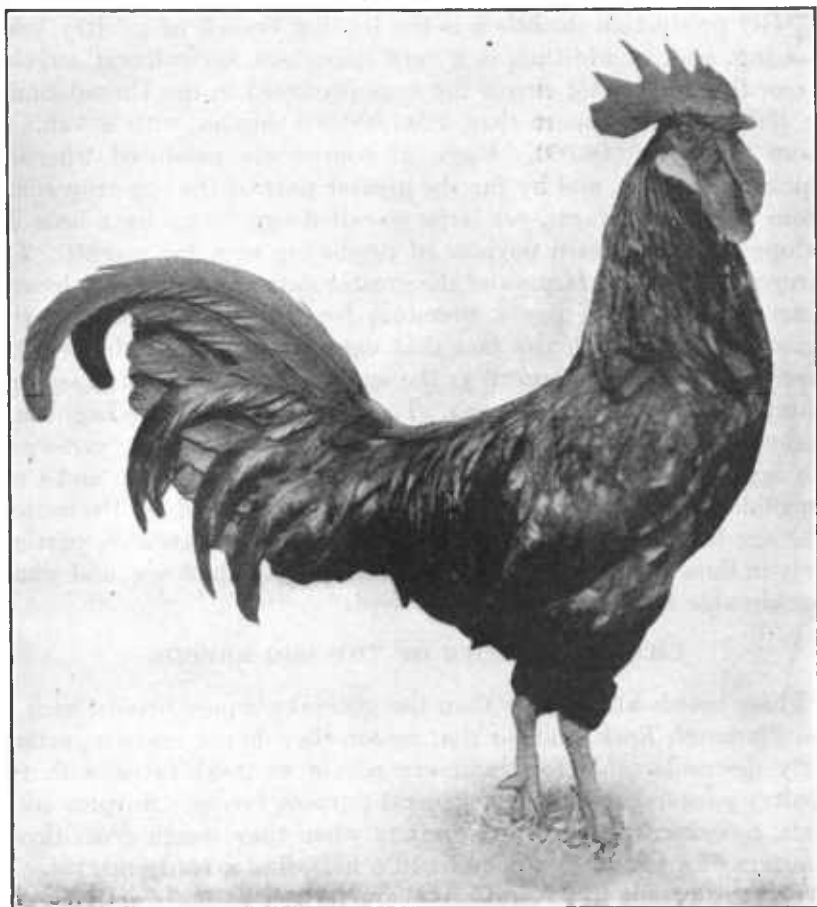


FIG. 2.—Single Comb Brown Leghorn, male.



FIG. 3.—Single Comb Brown Leghorn, female.

large area and pick up a considerable amount of feed. Fowls of these breeds do not have the same tendency to become overfat as fowls of larger breeds, and though they respond to careful feeding they are not so quick to feel the bad effects of overfeeding. Because of their smaller size they do not eat as much as fowls of the larger breeds.

All of the egg breeds are classed as nonsitters—that is to say, they do not become broody and hatch their eggs. Occasional individuals will show broodiness, and will even bring off a hatch of chicks; but they are not dependable for this purpose. Where egg breeds are kept it is therefore necessary either to depend upon hatching with incubators and brooding with heated brooders or else to keep hens of a broody breed for the purpose of hatching and brooding the chicks.

All of the egg breeds are clean legged or have shanks free from feathers and have white or creamy white ear lobes. They are close-feathered fowls, being tighter in this respect than the Plymouth Rocks, but not so tight as the Games. All of them also lay white eggs of good size, and as a class they are reputed to be excellent layers.

BREEDS AND VARIETIES.

The Mediterranean class includes the following standard breeds and varieties:

BREEDS.	VARIETIES.	BREEDS.	VARIETIES.
Leghorn-----	Single Comb Brown.	Minorca-----	Single Comb Black.
	Rose Comb Brown.		Rose Comb Black.
	Single Comb White.		Single Comb White.
	Rose Comb White.		Rose Comb White.
	Single Comb Buff.		Single Comb Buff.
	Rose Comb Buff.	Spanish-----	White Faced Black.
	Single Comb Black.	Blue Andalusian.	
	Silver.	Ancona-----	Single Comb.
	Red Pyle.		Rose Comb.

The Continental class includes the following standard breed and varieties.

BREED.	VARIETIES.
Campine-----	Silver.
	Golden.

In describing these breeds and varieties it is the intention to give only a general statement of their appearance and characteristics. For a description sufficiently detailed to enable one to breed exhibition specimens it will be necessary to refer to the American Standard of Perfection, a book published by the American Poultry Association, which is the guide by which all the poultry shows in the United States are judged.

LEGHORN.

The Leghorn for years has been a widely known breed in the United States. Leghorns were brought into this country from Italy. The first varieties imported were the Single Comb Brown and the Single Comb White. There is every indication that this breed originated in Italy, where fowls of a similar type have been kept for many years. The breed is noted for its alertness, its stylishness of carriage, and the graceful blending of its different sections. In general the breed may be described as a rather small, comparatively long-backed chicken, with moderately low-carried, well-furnished, and well-spread tail, and with a long, sweeping curve of neck, back, and tail. These birds have comparatively long shanks, are well up on legs, showing the hock and a part of the thigh. The body should be nicely curved throughout and the breast quite prominent. All the Leghorns have yellow skin and yellow shanks.

All the varieties of Leghorns are identical in size and type, differing only in kind of comb and in color. The single comb in the male should be of medium size and should stand erect, with five regular, deeply serrated points. The blade of the comb should extend straight out from the back of the head, and should not follow the curve of

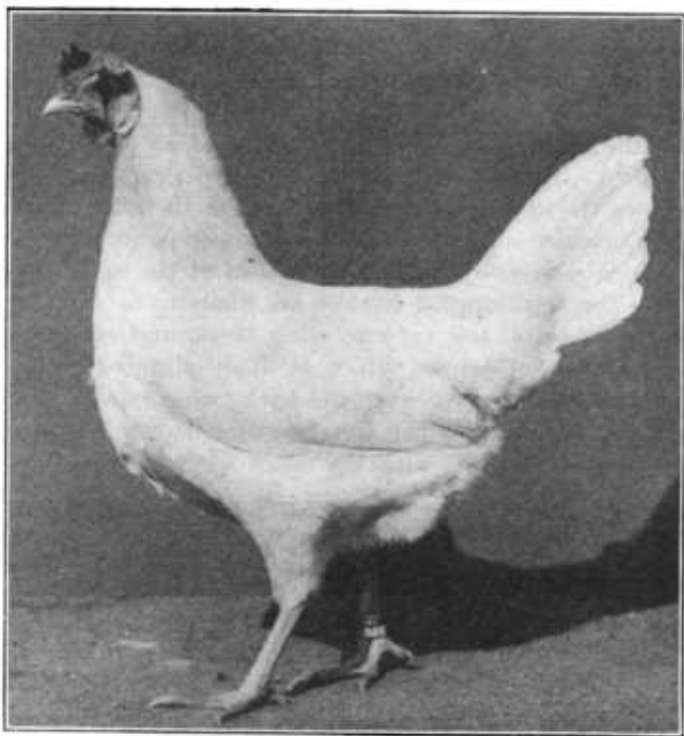


FIG. 4.—Single Comb White Leghorn, female.

the neck or incline upward. In the female the front and the first point should stand erect, but the remainder of the comb droops to one side. The comb in both sexes should be free from wrinkles, thumb marks, or folds. In the rose-comb varieties the comb of the male should be of medium size and square in front, well filled and free from hollows, the spike well developed and extending straight back off the head, showing no tendency to follow the curve of the neck or to turn upward. The rose comb of the female is small and neat, and in shape is like that of the male.

The standard weights are: Cock, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; hen, 4 pounds; cockerel, $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; pullet, $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

The Single Comb Brown Leghorn (figs. 2 and 3) is one of the older varieties of this breed known in this country. In color the male has a dark-red head, a rich red hackle and saddle, the feathers of which are striped with a greenish-black stripe extending through the middle of each feather. The back is of the same shade of red as the hackle but is without the striping. The wing bows are a rich red, the fronts and coverts greenish black, which show as a distinct wing bar when the wing is folded. The primaries are black, with their lower

webs edged with brown. The secondaries also are black, the lower webs showing edges of brown. The tail, body, breast, fluff, and thighs are black. The shanks are yellow, while the toes may be yellow or a dusky yellow. The undercolor throughout is slate.

In color the female has a golden yellow head which shows a tinge of dark brown. The hackle is golden yellow with a black stripe extending down the middle of each feather as in the male, except that the stripe is broader and terminates in a rounder point. It is difficult to obtain females showing good hackles and at the same time good stippling, as the best-stippled females are likely to be weak in striping. The back, body, tail coverts, wing bows, and coverts have a surface color of light brown, which is finely stippled with darker brown. The shade of color over the back, wing bows and coverts should be even and the feather free from shafting. The wing primaries are a slaty brown, with the outer webs showing a narrow

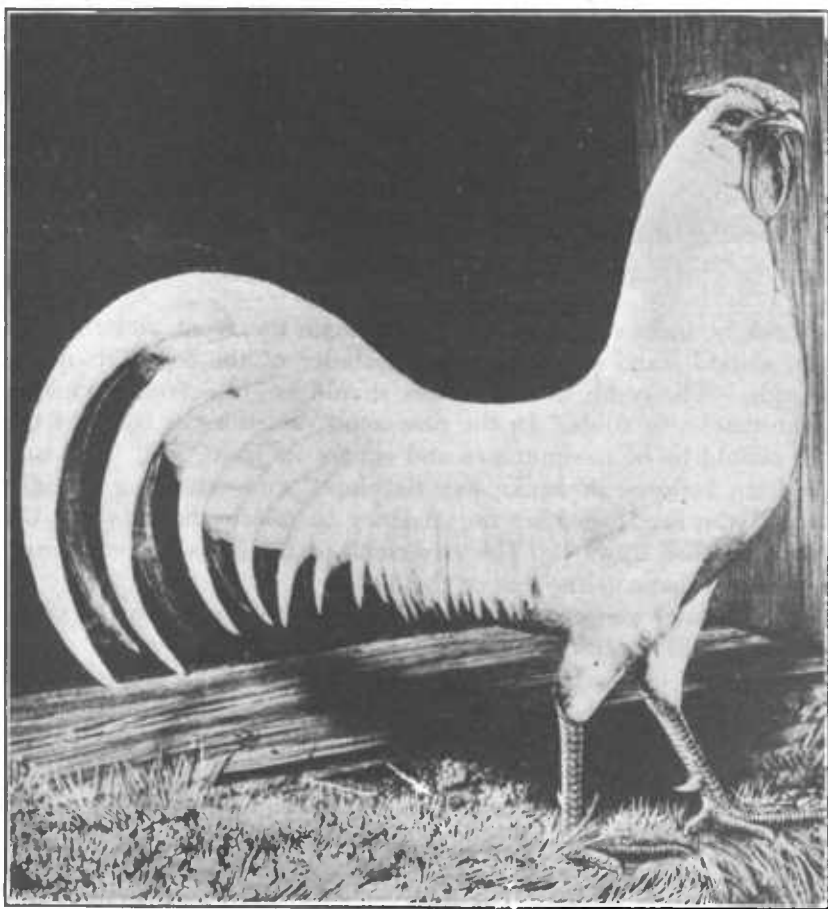


FIG. 5.—Rose Comb White Leghorn, male.

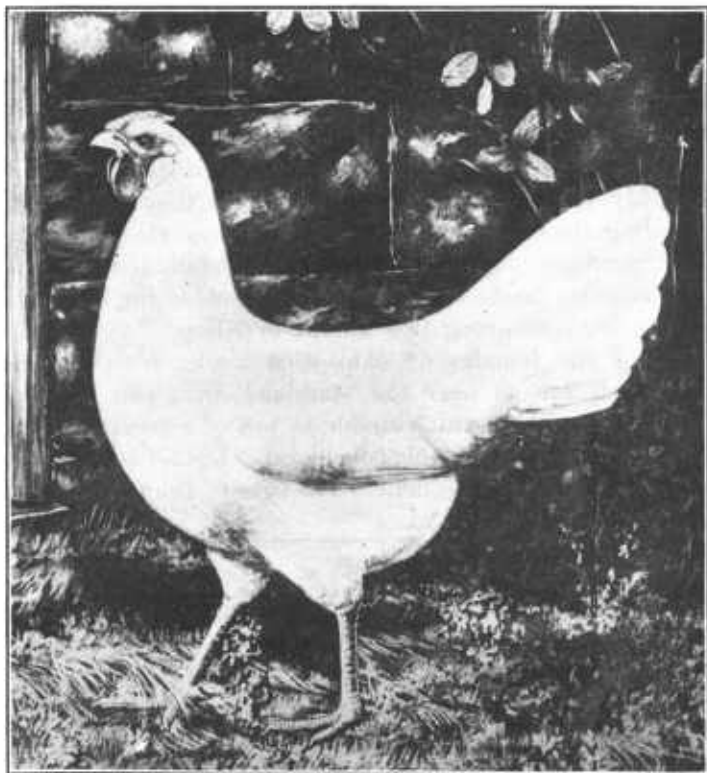


FIG. 6.—Rose Comb White Leghorn, female.

edging of brown. The secondaries are brown, with the outer webs finely stippled with lighter brown. The tail is black, with the two highest main tail feathers stippled with lighter brown. The breast should be rich clear salmon, free from either penciling, stippling, or shafting. The sides of the breast shade gradually to the color of the wings. The fluff and thighs are slate, tinged with brown. As in the male, the undercolor throughout is slate.

The Brown Leghorn is one of the varieties in which double mating is commonly practiced in order to produce birds of exhibition color in both sexes. By double mating is meant the use of two separate matings—one for the production of males of standard or exhibition color and the other for the production of females of standard or exhibition color. In mating for males of exhibition color a male is selected which approaches as closely as possible the standard description. With this male should be used females which have been bred from a line of exhibition males and which differ from the standard description for exhibition females. In general these females will be of a darker shade than the standard calls for. The

back and wings should be of a darker color than that shown in the standard-colored female, and should show very coarse stippling. The neck should be strong in striping. The breast should be dark reddish salmon, although some breeders use females with a dark stippled or penciled breast. It is essential that the undercolor be quite dark, even to the skin. It is also well to select females with small, evenly serrated, upstanding combs, as they tend to produce better combs in the male. This mating is known as the cockerel mating, because it produces a greater percentage of standard-colored males, while the females produced are too dark in color for exhibition, but are suitable for continuing this line of breeding.

In mating for females of exhibition color, females should be selected which are as near the standard description as possible. Mate with these a male which should be out of a female of fine quality. These males are invariably considerably lighter colored in all red sections than the exhibition male. The base of the neck and the sad-

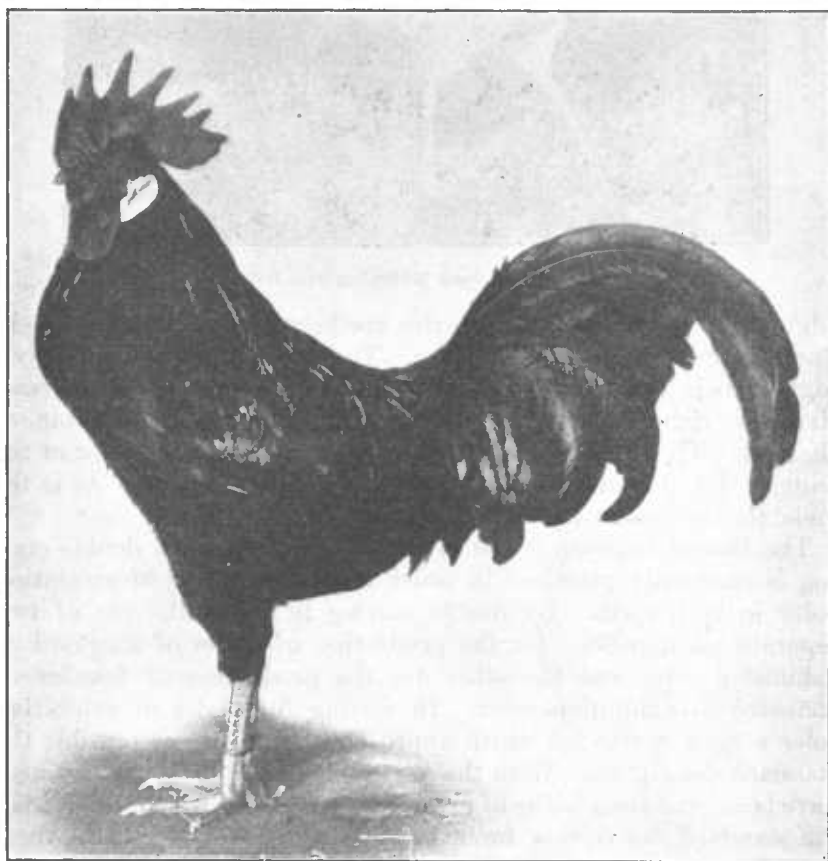


FIG. 7.—Black Leghorn, male.

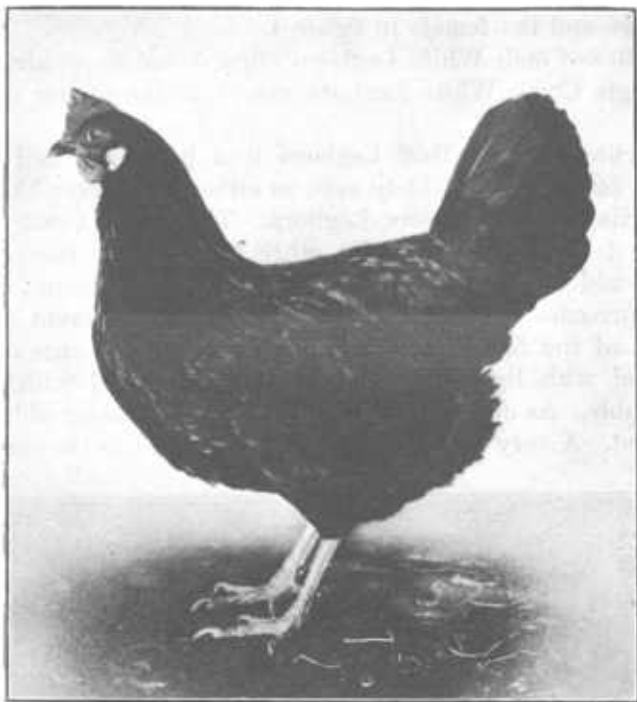


FIG. 8.—Black Leghorn, female.

dle should approach light orange in shade; the saddle should show no striping, and the undercolor throughout should be light slate instead of dark slate. A thin comb, even if a little large, is not bad, as it tends to produce good combs on the females. This mating is known as the pullet mating, because it produces a larger percentage of females of exhibition color, while the males produced are too light for exhibition, but may be used to continue this line of breeding.

The Rose Comb Brown Leghorn is identical in color and type with the Single Comb Brown Leghorn, the only difference being in the matter of the rose comb.

The Single Comb White Leghorn undoubtedly is the best known of the Leghorns or of any variety of the egg breeds. It is widely kept, both on special egg farms and on general farms in certain sections of the United States. In some sections the keeping of White Leghorns has been developed on a large scale, and these sections may well be termed White Leghorn centers. The largest and best-known of these centers are the districts around Petaluma, California, and Vineland, New Jersey. In type the Single Comb White Leghorn is identical with the Single Comb Brown Leghorn. In color both the males and females are white throughout, and should be free from any brassiness or creaminess. The shanks and

toes should be a rich yellow. The male of this variety is shown on the title page and the female in figure 4.

The Rose Comb White Leghorn (figs. 5 and 6) is identical with the Single Comb White Leghorn except in the matter of the rose comb.

The Single Comb Buff Leghorn is a handsome and attractive variety, but is not so widely kept as either the Single Comb White or the Single Comb Brown Leghorn. The Single Comb Buff Leghorn is distinguished from the other Leghorns by the color alone. This should be an even shade of golden buff throughout. Shafting, or the presence of feathers having a shaft of different color from the rest of the feathers, and mealiness, or the presence of feathers sprinkled with lighter color as though powdered with meal, are undesirable. As deep an undercolor of buff as it is possible to obtain is desired. A very important point with regard to the surface color



FIG. 9.—Silver Leghorn, male.



FIG. 10.—Silver Leghorn, female.

is to have the shade as even as possible throughout. The legs and toes are a rich yellow.

The Rose Comb Buff Leghorn is identical with the Single Comb Buff Leghorn except in the matter of the rose comb.

The Single Comb Black Leghorn (figs. 7 and 8) is distinguished from the other Single Comb Leghorns by the color alone, which is black in all sections, showing a lustrous sheen, free from purple barring. The undercolor throughout is a dull black. The legs and toes are yellow or dusky yellow. The Single Comb Black Leghorn is a very attractive variety, but is not found very commonly.

The Silver Leghorn (figs. 9 and 10) is a single-comb variety of this breed and is identical in type with the other single-comb varieties. This variety also is most attractive in color but is not very commonly kept. The male has a silver top color. The head is silver white and the hackle is of the same color but with a median stripe of black. The wing fronts and shoulders are black, the bows a silver white, the coverts black and forming a distinct bar across the wing. The primaries are black except for the silver white outer edges of the lower feathers. The secondaries are also black, but a part of the outer web is white in some of the feathers, forming a white wing bar. The back, saddle, and lower tail coverts are silver white. The cape, main tail feathers, sickles, upper tail coverts, breast, body, thighs,

and fluff are black. The undercolor is gray throughout. In the female the head is a silver gray. The neck is a silver gray, each feather showing a narrow black stripe. The wing bows and coverts are silver white, finely stippled with ashy gray, giving these sections a general gray cast. In the primary and secondary feathers the upper webs are gray and the lower webs a slaty gray. The front of the neck is a light salmon, and the breast is salmon, fading gradually to the color of the wings at the sides. The back, body, and thighs are the same color as the wing bows and coverts. The tail is black except that the upper two feathers are light gray and the tail coverts are gray. The fluff is a light ashy gray. The undercolor is gray throughout. The legs and toes of both sexes are yellow.

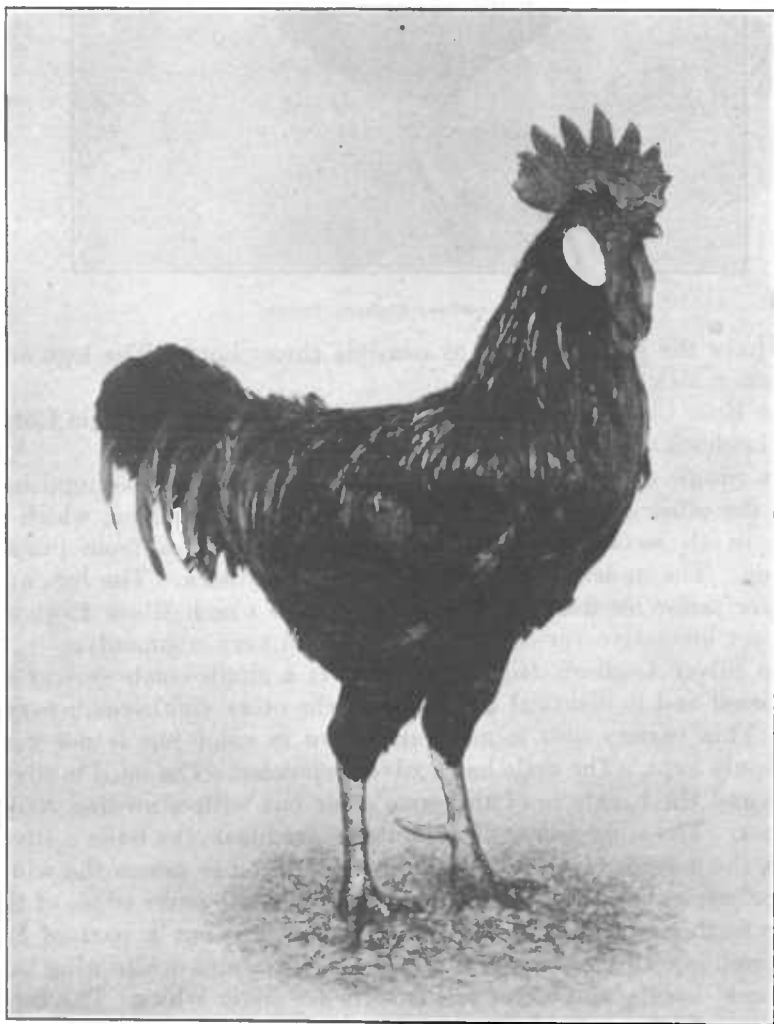


FIG. 11.—Single Comb Black Minorca, male.



FIG. 12.—Single Comb Black Minorca, female.

The Red Pyle Leghorn also is a single-comb variety and is not very commonly found. In type this variety is identical with the other Single Comb Leghorns. The male is white with a red and orange top color. The head should show a bright orange, the hackle a light orange which may show some tinge of brighter yellow, the wing bows red, part of the outer web of the secondaries red, back red, and saddle light orange. The outer webs of the lower feathers of the primaries are bay. All other sections are white, and the under-color is white throughout. In the female the color including under-color is white throughout except for the head, which is golden, the hackle or neck feathers, which are white edged with gold, the feathers in front of the neck, which are white with a salmon tinge, and the breast, which is salmon. The legs and toes of both sexes are yellow.

MINORCA.

The Minorca appears to have been kept in Spain for a long time, and it is probable that the Minorcas found in this country came originally from that source. As the name would indicate, they are commonly supposed to have been natives of the island of Minorca. The importations to this country probably were from England rather than directly from Spain.

The Minorca is the largest of the Mediterranean or egg breeds. It is characterized by its size, its length of body, and the large comb and long wattles. The Minorca shows a long back which has a noticeable slope from the shoulders downward to the base of the tail. The underline of the body is also noticeably long. The tail is rather low carried and is well spread. The Minorca also has long shanks and is well up on the legs, showing the hock and part of the thigh. The breast is prominent and well rounded. In general the Minorca is a more angular-looking bird than the Leghorn, as it does not have as smooth a curve where the back and tail sections join.

The comb of the single-comb varieties is unusually large. In the male it is erect and has six evenly and deeply serrated points. The blade of the comb has a tendency to follow the neck. In the female also the comb is large and six-pointed and is lopped. The front of the comb, instead of being straight as in the case of the comb of the Leghorn female, folds to one side and then the remainder of the comb droops to the other side of the head. The comb of the male



FIG. 13.—Rose Comb Black Minorca, male.

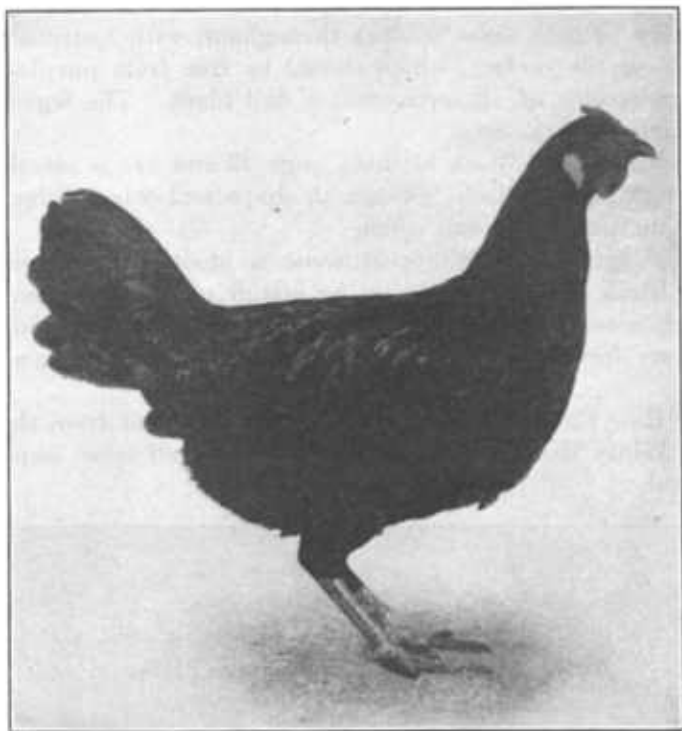


FIG. 14.—Rose Comb Black Minorca, female.

of the rose-comb varieties is fairly large, square in front, and terminating in a well-defined spike which has a tendency to follow the neck. The rose comb of the female is practically the same as that of the male in shape, but, of course, is smaller, although rather large for a female.

The skin of all varieties of Minorcas is white. This is a distinct drawback from the standpoint of the production of market poultry in this country, as the popular demand is for fowls with a yellow skin. The black and dark slate legs and toes of the black varieties, and the white or pinkish white legs and toes of the white and buff varieties, are likewise a drawback from a market point of view, as the popular demand is for yellow-legged fowls.

The standard weights of the Single Comb Black Minorca are: Cock, 9 pounds; hen, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; pullet, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. The standard weights of all of the other varieties of Minorcas are: Cock, 8 pounds; hen, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, $6\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; pullet, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

The Single Comb Black Minorca (figs. 11 and 12) undoubtedly is the best known of the Minorcas in this country. This variety is

especially reputed for the size and pure white color of its eggs. The color of both sexes is black throughout, with lustrous greenish sheen over the surface, which should be free from purple barring. The undercolor of all sections is a dull black. The legs and toes are black or dark slate.

The Rose Comb Black Minorca (figs. 13 and 14) is identical with the Single Comb Black Minorca in shape and color, differing only in the matter of size and comb.

The Single Comb White Minorca is identical with the Single Comb Black Minorca except in the matter of size and color. Birds of both sexes are a pure white throughout, which should be free from any foreign color whatever. The legs and toes are a pinkish white.

The Rose Comb White Minorca is distinguished from the Single Comb White Minorca by the comb alone. In all other respects it is identical.



FIG. 15.—White-faced Black Spanish, male.



FIG. 16.—White-faced Black Spanish, female.

The Single Comb Buff Minorca is identical with the Single Comb White Minorca in type and size, being distinguished only by its color. This should be an even, rich, golden buff throughout, being identical with that of the Buff Leghorn. The legs and toes are white or pinkish white.

WHITE-FACED BLACK SPANISH.

The White-Faced Black Spanish (figs. 15 and 16) is generally considered to be the oldest fowl of the Mediterranean class. This breed undoubtedly was a native of Spain or one of the near-by countries. By reason of the very large, pendulous white face, it is striking and unique in appearance. In type it is very much on the Minorca order, although it has not quite so long a body and has a somewhat higher carriage of tail. This breed is comparatively rare in the United States.

The comb is single and rather large, although not so large as the Single Comb Minorca. It has five regular, deeply serrated points, and the blade extends nearly straight off the head, having little if any tendency to follow the neck. The comb of the female is erect in front and droops to one side as in the Leghorn. The striking feature of this bird is a white face, which should be smooth and free from wrinkles, being long, deep, and pendulous. In breeding this fowl the white face is very important, the largest or longest and

whitest face possible being desired. The face in males sometimes measures 7 inches in length. In color this bird has a black surface throughout with a lustrous greenish sheen. The undercolor is dark slate throughout. The color of legs and toes is a dark leaden blue or black. The color of the skin is white.

BLUE ANDALUSIAN.

The Andalusian (figs. 17 and 18) also is commonly supposed to be a native of Spain and has derived its name from the Province of Andalusia. Andalusians have been known in this country for a long period, but have never become very popular or very widely kept.

The Andalusian is very similar to the Leghorn in type, but is a slightly larger bird. The standard weights of the Blue Andalusian are: Cock, 6 pounds; hen, 5 pounds; cockerel, 5 pounds; pullet, 4 pounds.

This is a single-comb breed, and in the male the comb is somewhat larger than in the Leghorn and the blade has a slight tendency to



FIG. 17.—Blue Andalusian, male.

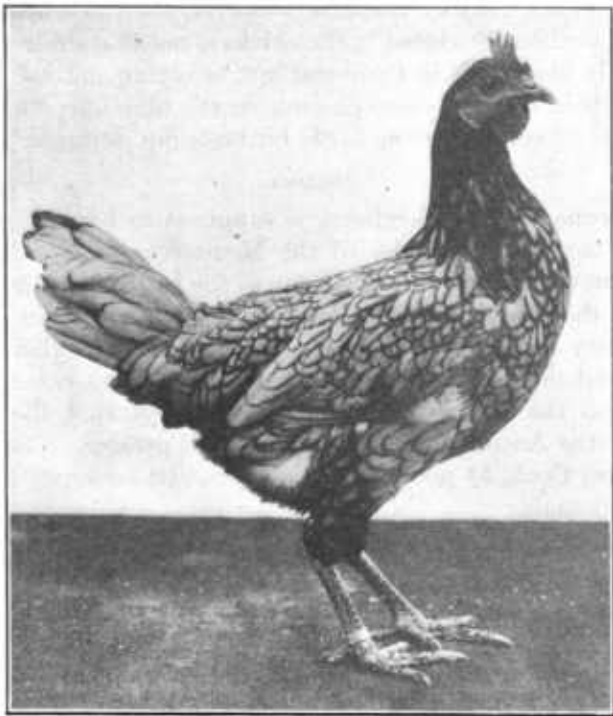


FIG. 18.—Blue Andalusian, female.

follow the neck. The comb of the female is practically identical with that of the Leghorn female. The male has a general top color of dark lustrous blue, approaching black, which extends over the hackle, back, saddle, shoulders, sickle feathers, and tail coverts. The rest of the plumage is a slaty blue which shows in most sections a well-defined lacing of darker blue. In the female the general plumage color is a slaty blue of even shade, each feather having a clear, well-defined, narrow lacing of darker blue. The neck has a decidedly darker cast of plumage than the rest of the body. The undercolor of both sexes is a slaty blue throughout. The legs and toes are leaden blue and the skin is white in color.

The behavior of the Blue Andalusian in breeding is peculiar and interesting. When both sexes in the mating are blue, the chicks hatched are never all of them blue, but approximately 50 per cent come black or white or some combination of black and white. One-half of this 50 per cent, or 25 per cent of all the chicks from the mating, are black or occasionally black showing some red, especially in the males; while the other 25 per cent of the chicks come some kind of white—in general, white splashed with black or blue. If matings are made in which one of the sexes is black and the other white, all of the chicks hatched will come some sort of blue. This latter form

of mating is not used by breeders, however, for the reason that the quality of the blue produced in the chicks is not that desired. Breeders use only blue birds in their matings, selecting individuals which will give them the best color possible in the blue offspring and discarding the off-colored young birds for breeding purposes.

ANCONA.

The Ancona, like the Leghorn, is supposed to have originated in Italy. It is one of the older of the Mediterranean breeds, but has not been known in this country so long as the Leghorn or the Minorca.

In type this breed is very similar to the Leghorn. In general it seems to have about the same utility qualities as the Leghorn, but has never gained the popularity which the Leghorn enjoys. In size the Ancona and the Leghorn are the same, except that the standard weight for the Ancona hen is one-half pound greater. The standard weights are: Cock, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; hen, $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds; cockerel, $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. pullet, $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

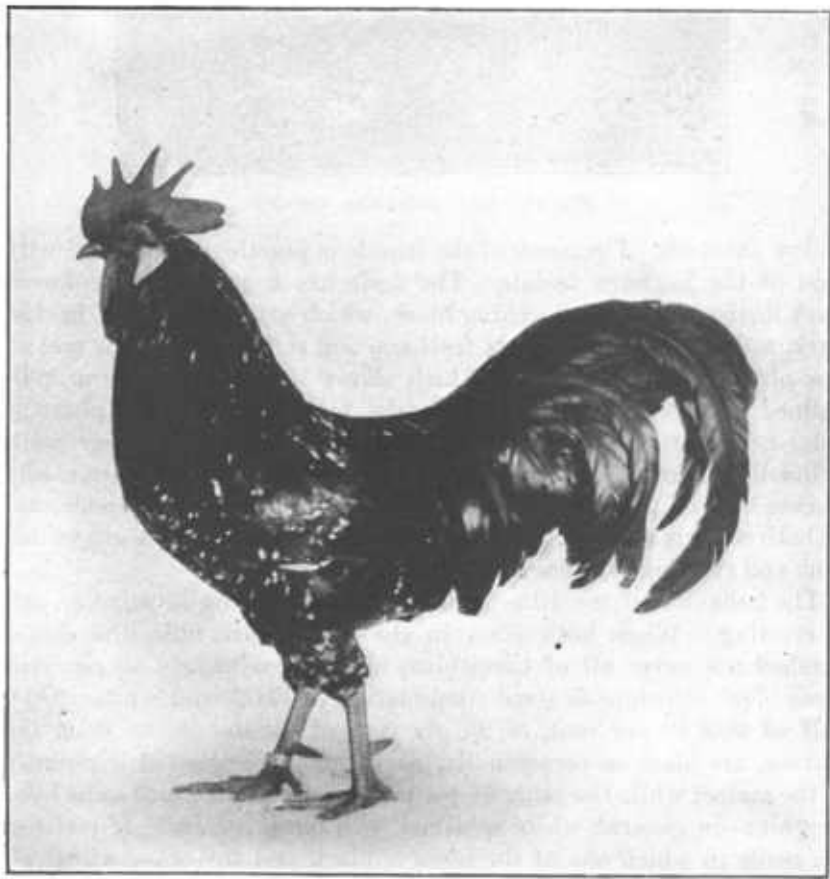


FIG. 19.—Single Comb Ancona, male.

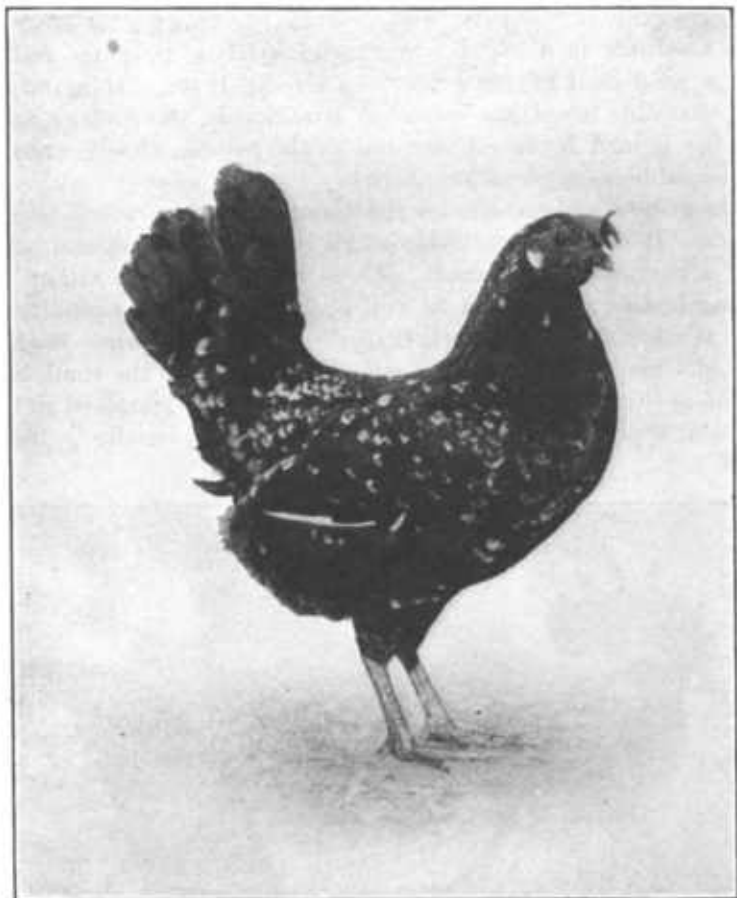


FIG. 20.—Single Comb Ancona, female.

The Ancona has a general body color of lustrous black with certain of the feathers throughout the plumage tipped with a V-shaped white tip. The proportion of feathers carrying such a white tip is one in five. The black top color of the male has a greenish sheen which is absent in the female. The main tail feathers and sickles of the male and the main tail feathers of the female are each tipped with white. The primary and secondary wing feathers also carry white tips. The undercolor is dark slate throughout. The legs and toes are yellow or yellow mottled with black, and the skin is yellow.

The Single Comb Ancona (figs. 19 and 20) and the Rose Comb Ancona are identical in every respect except in the matter of comb. The single comb of both sexes is identical with that of the Single Comb Leghorn, while the rose comb is identical with Leghorn Rose Comb in the female, but in the male is slightly smaller.

CAMPINE.

The Campine is a breed which originated in Belgium and has found a good deal of favor there as an egg breed. It is only recently that this breed has attracted attention in the United States, but it has gained favor rapidly and at the present time is enjoying a considerable measure of popularity.

In its general characteristics the Campine is very much like the Leghorn. It is a comparatively small breed, very alert and active, and of a nervous temperament. These fowls should be rather deep and long bodied and should be well rounded. The Campine female has, if anything, a longer back than the Leghorn female. Both varieties of Campines are single combed, the shape of the comb being the same as that of the Leghorn in both sexes. The standard weights are: Cock, 6 pounds; hen, 4 pounds; cockerel, 5 pounds; pullet, $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.

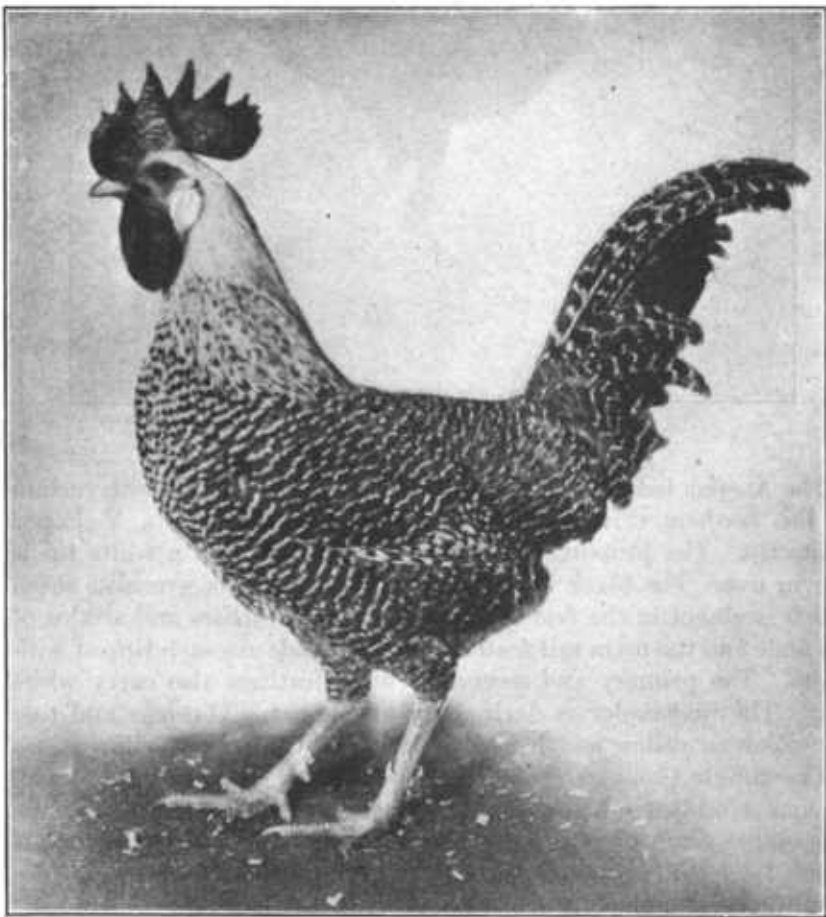


FIG. 21.—Silver Campine, male.

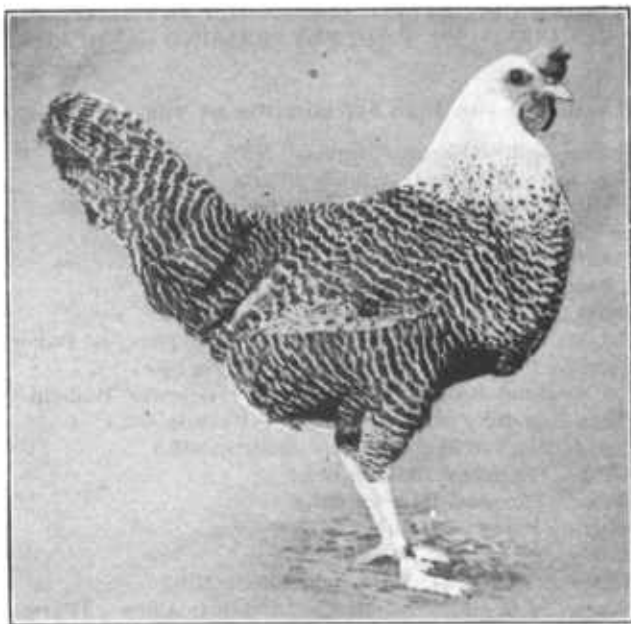


FIG. 22.—Silver Campine, female.

In the Silver Campine (figs. 21 and 22) both the male and the female have white heads and hackles. The rest of the plumage is a greenish black, each feather barred with distinct white bars, the black bars being wider than the white by about four times. The white bars do not extend straight across the feather, but have a slight tendency to be V-shaped at the quill. The undercolor is slate throughout. The legs and toes are leaden blue and the skin white in color.

The Golden Campine is identical with the Silver Campine except that the white of the Silver Campine is replaced by golden bay.

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